

Audio Recording:

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

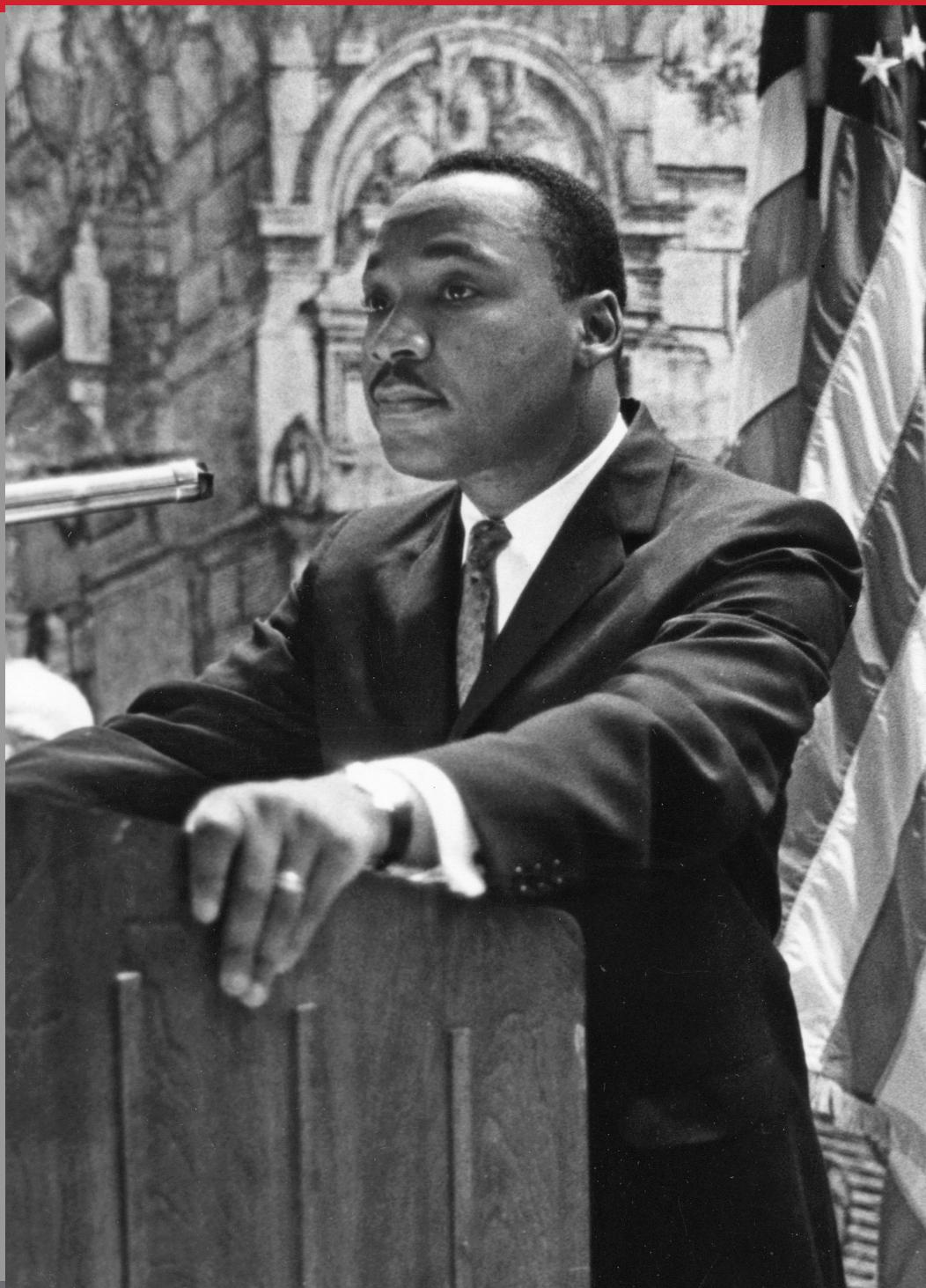
Address to the New York State Civil War Centennial Commission

September 12, 1962



Teacher's Guide Grades 8-12

This curriculum is aligned
with the New York State P-12
Learning Standards



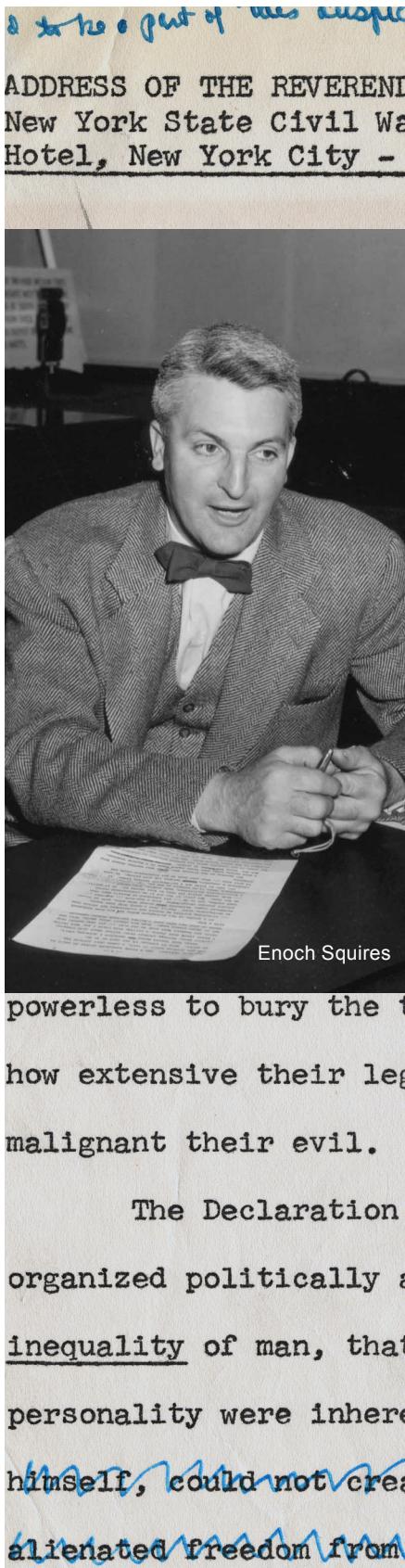
Martin Luther King in New York for the
Centennial Commemoration of the
Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation,
September 12, 1962.
New York State Archives



“ If our nation had done nothing more in its whole history than to create just two documents, its contribution to civilization would be imperishable. The first of these documents is the Declaration of Independence and the other is that which we are here to honor tonight, the Emancipation Proclamation. All tyrants, past, present and future, are powerless to bury the truths in these declarations, no matter how extensive their legions, how vast their power and how malignant their evil. ”



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
September 12, 1962



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On September 12th, 1962, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the New York Civil War Centennial Commission at a dinner organized by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller to honor the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. This audio recording offers teachers and students unique insight into King's style of oration and the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation to the greater Civil Rights movement. Recorded live at the Park-Sheraton Hotel in New York City by Schenectady, NY-based radio man Enoch Squires, this is the only known audio version to exist of King's centennial address, containing his own words and edits which were not included in his original typed copy of the speech. It conveys many hallmarks of King's style of oration—the cadence, rhythm and tone are stylistically unique to his manner of speaking and cannot be captured in plain text alone. The online exhibition features the audio recording of King presenting his speech, a type-written copy of the speech with Enoch Squires' edits, and an exact transcript of the audio recording as well as educational resources to help guide educators in the use of these resources in the classroom.

The educational resources are a collaborative effort between museum educators, teachers, and archivists, designed to provide educators with strategies and resources for teaching about the Civil Rights movement and Dr. King through both the audio recording of his speech and the written copy with Squires' notes. By using this address, and the lesson guides provided, students will gain insight into Dr. King's ideas and views of the Civil Rights movement, the connections with the current events of his time and the historical events before, and Dr. King's skills as an orator to build their understanding of the power behind his words.

The exercises in the Teacher's Guide show the careful wording and delivery of King's Commemoration speech and how it reflects his masterful ability to understand his audience and direct their attention beyond the 100-year celebration of President Lincoln's historic Proclamation toward the current plight of African-Americans in their ongoing struggle against injustice. By investigating the audio and other source documents, students will discover how King carefully wove many different themes into one, focusing his audience's



attention on the struggle for racial equality with powerful conviction. The exercises highlight the connection King established between Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, emphasizing their unfulfilled promises.

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Students will learn how this speech is an early forerunner to King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech, which he delivered less than a year later. By comparing both speeches, students will see how King celebrates the Declaration of Independence and especially, the Emancipation Proclamation. Both speeches employ similar language, noting the hypocrisy of racial injustice in America, the urgency of the present, and arguing for a common cause of freedom for all races alike. King borrows directly from this earlier speech when saying in 1963, "we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a symphony of brotherhood." King closes by outlining his dream for the future of the nation in each as he proclaims the spiritual links to the past. Just as King saw the Emancipation Proclamation as the offspring of the Declaration of Independence, so too can it be seen that his "I Have A Dream" speech is the offspring of this Centennial Commemoration address.